Toward New Models of Public Health Engagement: Leveraging Social Media for Immunization Promotion
Brittany Maynard (1984-2014) was a terminally ill twenty-something battling terminal cancer on her own terms, and decided to choose her death in Oregon, where it is legal to die with dignity. She moved to Oregon, where it is legal to die with dignity, and then committed assisted suicide in 2014.

https://compassionandchoices.org/stories/brittany-maynard/

"Having this choice at the end of my life helps me embrace life," she said. "It has been my desire to live my remaining months enjoying each moment and to die peacefully when I choose. I look forward to the day when Oregon will be able to provide the same choice to those suffering from incurable life-threatening illness who wish to die with dignity."
Overview

- Old media vs. new media
- Social media for health promotion
- Best practices of social media outreach
- Social media for immunization promotion
Social media are a gift

Image by maciej326 on Pixabay
Old Media  ➔  New Media

Mass Media
• Wide reach
• Controlled
• Message dissemination
• Hands-off
• Expensive

Social Media
• Wide & niche reach
• Uncontrolled
• Participation
• Hands-on
• No cost*

Web 2.0
Measles is a highly contagious disease that can bring on a fever and a head-to-toe rash.

A new, large study finds that children who did not get childhood vaccines were more likely to be diagnosed with autism than kids who did not receive scheduled vaccinations.

In January, the World Health Organization declared vaccine hesitancy one of the top 10 threats to global health — in the company of the Ebola virus and antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

This year I've seen mumps orchitis (unvaccinated) and a mother refuse tetanus vaccination for her unvaccinated daughter with a tetanus prone wound (one week after the news broke of the child who got tetanus and needed $1mil worth of care).

It's exhausting.
Social Media for Health Promotion: Challenges

- Lack of message control
- Message distortion
- Blurred boundaries
- Time/expertise needed
Social Media for Health Promotion: Opportunities

- Affordability
- Reach
- Narrowcasting
- Engagement
  - Benefits of peer-to-peer communication
- Community building
MODEL OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Opportunity       Challenge
Non-profits and Social Media Engagement

Information Dissemination
Dialogic Communication
Mobilization & Action

Most non-profits (including health) focus here

(Lovejoy & Saxton 2012; Guo & Saxton 2014)
Social Media for Health Promotion

- Public health is not leveraging social media as much as it could for engagement / dialogue
- Most messaging focuses on one-way information dissemination
- Engagement is important for health promotion
Best Practices of Social Media

1. Cultivate engagement
   • Social and content interactions
2. Facilitate two-way / multi-way communication
3. Build relationships and community
4. Mobilize action
Trends among Highly Engaging Campaigns

- Community building
- Positive affect
- Entertaining
- Celebrity involvement
- Self-expression

Image attribution: Jason Cayabyab vimeo.com

(Hether & Calabrese, in press)
Immunization Promotion

• No strong evidence to recommend any one specific intervention to address vaccine hesitancy/refusal (e.g. Dube, 2015)
• Social media is recommended, but cautiously
• Must establish active presence amidst vocal anti-vaccination community
Anti-vaccination Community

- Active on social media
- Confident messaging
- Use of:
  - Emotional appeals
  - Personal narrative / anecdotes
  - Non-expert “expertise”
    - “University of Google,” “Dr. Mom”
- Frame science as opinion

(Faaze et al., 2016; Kata et al., 2012; Nicholson & Leask, 2012)
Social Media for Immunization Promotion

1. Participate on social media
   • Interact and promote dialogue
2. Address an audience of undecided/unsure/uncertain
3. Don’t over-promote
4. Expand support base & build community
5. Consider a mixture of proven and innovative messaging strategies

(Faaze et al., 2016; Kata et al., 2012; Nicholson & Leask, 2012)
Messaging Strategies

1. Social norms (Dube 2015; Goldstein et al., 2015)
3. Engage in discussions and build relationships
Final Thoughts

• Social media have tremendous potential to facilitate engagement in public health issues in an unprecedented way

• Social media are not an instant remedy: using them well takes time and an investment of human resources

• Finding new ways forward will require thoughtful planning and hands-on implementation


Let’s continue the conversation.

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